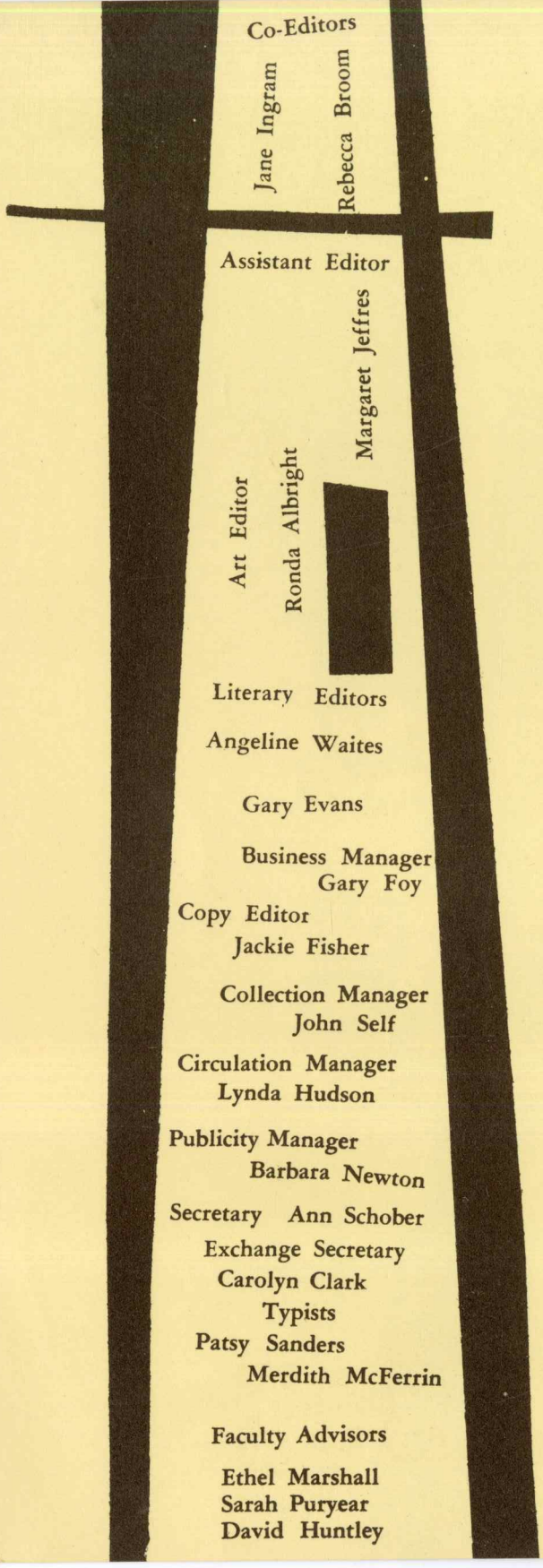
Alabama College

the tower

Montevallo, Alabama

Spring 1961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SPRING, 1961

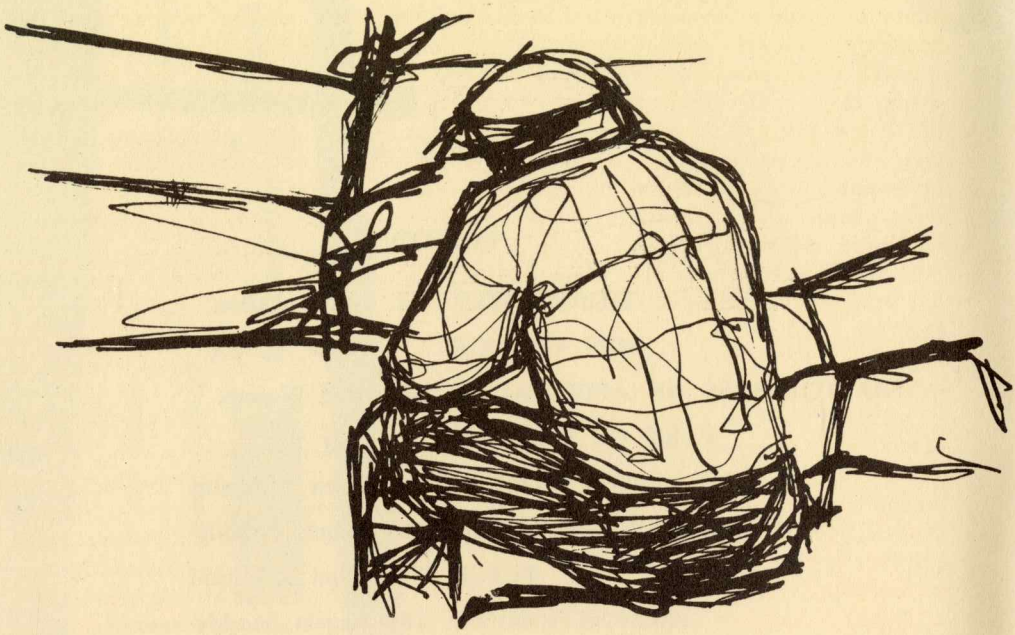
CONTENTS

THE HUNTER	4	Audrey Allen
BON VOYAGE	7	Wade Kenyon
NO STILLNESS AT APPOMATOX	8	Brad Wallace
PART OF A STORY	13	Gary Foy
TWO WORLDS	15	Allan Robinson
THE SHOES OF SEPTEMBER	16	Angela Snoddy
PLACE	17	Allan Robinson
PROPOSITIONING	18	Angela Snoddy
EUTHANASIA	19	Gary Foy
HOUSE OF MIRRORS	20	Ken Sobbie
VISIT TO THE STORE	20	Vic Brown
A POEM	21	Vicki Lyle
VIEW: BACK ALLEY	22	Allan Robinson
CLAUDE	23	Rebecca Broom
GOD-POEMS	25	
GOD POEM	26	Cassandra
GOD POEM NO. 1	28	Jessie Stone
GOD POEM NO. ½	29	Jessie Stone
GOD-MAN	30	J. C. Smith

the tower

The Hunter

by AUDREY ALLEN



It was one of those clear, cold days of midwinter in the South. The sun, shining brightly through trees long before stripped of foliage, gave only the appearance of cold light. Occasionally there was a high, brittle bird call from one of the denuded trees. This, aside from the quiet rustle of small game in the dry leaves, was the only sound. The sharp, biting wind that earlier had whipped at the obscure-looking slope of land had died down, leaving the whole area with a rigid and frozen look.

On a fallen tree the old man sat quite still, part of the unmoving scene, ignoring the gun propped at his side. After a long while he stiffly shifted his position, wincing at the pain in his joints as he did so. He made another clumsy, stiff movement and knocked the gun over from its propped position. With a muttered, "Oh, pshaw!" he set it up again. Then he began to rub his aching knees.

His joints always acted up like this in cold weather. It sure was cold out here, and they wouldn't sound the gun to gather for lunch for a good two or three hours yet. He longed for the warmth of a fire, even a small one, but they were forbidden on the stands; the deer would smell the smoke and sense danger. Not that it made that much difference in the number of deer that came by this stand, anyway. Deer very seldom came by this one—nobody knew why. But it was a convenient place to put old hunters—men who were invited on the hunt for old times' sake but who had become poor risks as far as hunting itself was concerned. Hunting requires a keen eye, a sharp ear, and split-second reflexes, said the young men, and when you grew old—well, you lost them. All a part of growing old; but you just had to accept it, said their trite philosophy. The old man had said it himself a hundred times. But now that it was being said of him, he felt sharply the plain injustice of the reasoning, and he resented the driveling pity it implied.

Aimlessly his thoughts drifted, and he found himself remembering a time when the situation was different. When he was twenty years old, he was the best hunter in three counties. To him, there had been nothing more thrilling than the hunting season—the crispness of the air; the rough joking of the men as they smeared deer blood on the face of the man who had shot his first deer; the strong black coffee brewed in an old tin can, the rustier the better; the quick lift of the gun to the shoulder, the aim, the squeeze, and the thundering ba-lam! that echoed and re-echoed through the woods. There was even a heady sort of excitment in seeing the dead animal lying in its own warm blood. It was not, as some people said, a sadistic urge to kill; it was a way of life, a proof of manhood and self-sufficiency that no other sport or skill could match.

After the hunt was over, there would be a tremendous barbecue of the venison brought in, and there was always someone with a squeaky fiddle or a jug to blow or even a washtub to thump, and there would be a fling to end 'em all. At one of these flings he had met the prettiest girl for miles around. The next spring they had been married.

Their life hadn't been easy, but they had worked hard and played hard, they'd made it worthwhile. The frame house to which he took his bride had weathered to a silver-gray and finally to a dark, black-brown; and the home had been a happy one. The six healthy children almost made up for the two that had died at birth—and there was always the excitement of the hunting season. She had felt it too; it was part of the cord of love and mutual understanding that bound them together. That cord had held secure against all that life could pitch at it, but it had had to yield to death. Her horse had shied at a snake; she had fallen, her nead had struck a sharp stone. She had been dead before anyone could reach her.

The years had passed, with field and farmwork, and seeing to the children, learning day by day to miss her less—and always the deer hunt; and suddenly he had been old. The children were grown up and gone away, and the realization had come. For him there had been no gradual process; just—once he was young, and now he was old.

The old man broke off his thought to gaze around him, to strain his eyes at his surroundings. Everything seemed sort of vague and a little blurry to him, and his greatest effort couldn't seem to clear it up. He put his head to one side and put one hand behind his ear, trying to hear the hounds baying to signal a deer that had been spotted. He could detect no such sound. For a moment he went on listening intently, then, becoming bored with the attempt, he cradled the gun in his arms and returned to his reverie.

The children had begun to hammer away at him four of five years ago. You're getting on up in years, Papa. That old house is so inconvenient, Papa. You need to be around people, Papa; suppose something were to happen? You're so far from anyone! Come live with us, Papa. We'd love to have you. And so on and on, until, tired of the argument, he had agreed. He had sold the house and all the land, and he had gone to live with his oldest son and daughter-in-law.

As long as he lived, he would not forget the bitter disillusionment of that first day of living in someone else's home. His daughter-in-law, Ann, had taken him into a sunny room with lots of windows and a hooked rug and a cushioned rocking chair. "This is yours, Papa," she had told him tenderly. "Yours for as long as you want to stay with us." The tender welcome had become rather strained when Ann saw his most prized possessions: the mounted head of the 16-point buck he had shot, and the hand-made gun rack with the six beautifully kept rifles and shotguns. His hearing wasn't so far gone that he wasn't able to hear the conversation in the next room that night. Ann's clear, sharp voice had said:

"Honestly, Hon, that moth-ridden, glass-eyed old antique he wanted to put on my wall! And those guns—well, they'd make me nervous. After all, his is old, and the children might get their hands on them—"

"I don't know, though, Ann," Doug had said thoughtfully. "Those things mean an awful lot to him."

"Maybe they do, but they don't mean a thing to me but trouble, and I won't have them in my house, that's all."

"Look, Ann, I don't think you're being fair about this thing. Can't you see—"

"Well, whose side are you on, anyway? Listen, we agreed that his living with us didn't have to disrupt our house, and if it's going to do this to us—" There was a meaningful pause.

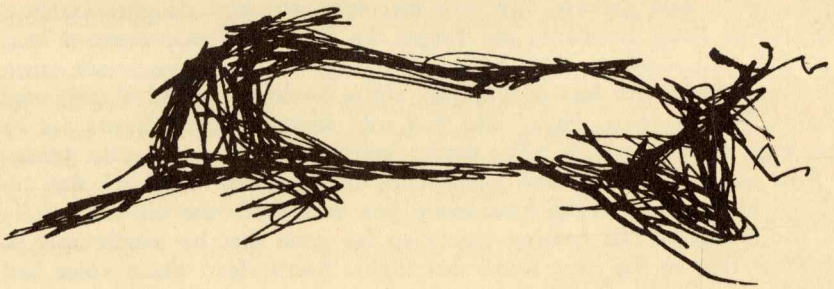
"All *right,* Ann. All right."

The next day, after tactful explanations from Doug that hurt them both, the mounted deer head had gone up to the attic, and the guns had been stored in a locked closet.

That had been the beginning. It kept up day after day, week after week. Papa, that shirt doesn't look too clean. Could you change it? Papa, all that strong black coffee isn't good for you. Have you taken your vitamins today, Papa? Doug's falsely cheerful invitation: How about a little hunting next week, Papa? And the final insult: You take this stand, Papa. The deserted, forsaken stand, hardly a likely place to find a deer. They assumed that he was sufficiently senile to have forgotten. Growing old . . . .

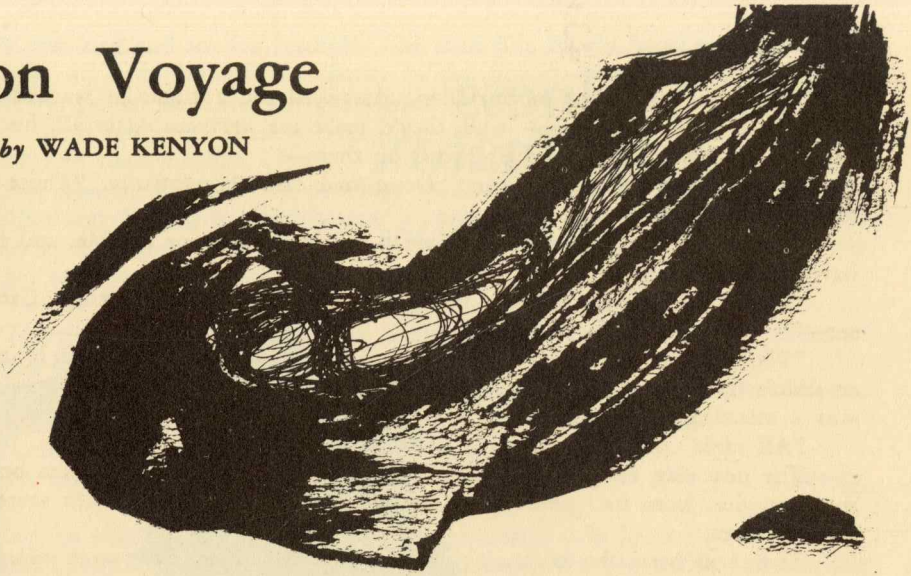
A movement in the bush snapped him back to the present. It was then that he saw the deer. His grip on the gun tightened as he stared at the still figure fifteen feet away. The outline was fuzzy, but there was no mistaking it. He could imagine every detail—the quivering, sensitive nose; the one forefoot uplifted and ready for flight. Slowly the old man slipped the gun to his shoulder. Carefully he eased off the safety catch, aimed by pure instinct; breathlessly he squeezed the trigger, squeeze, squeeze, slow now, steady, don't jerk . . . ba-lam! Once more the air shook with the thundering, crackling echoes. The deer gave a startled leap and then fell wounded to the ground. It gave three convulsive jerks and then lay dead.

The old man walked toward the dead animal, feeling the old excitement crowding up in his throat, the desire to scream savagely to let off the emotion that swept over him and almost made him dizzy. He raised the gun and fired the second shot that would bring the other men to his stand. Then he stood over his kill and looked down at it, and waited for the men to come.



Bon Voyage

by WADE KENYON

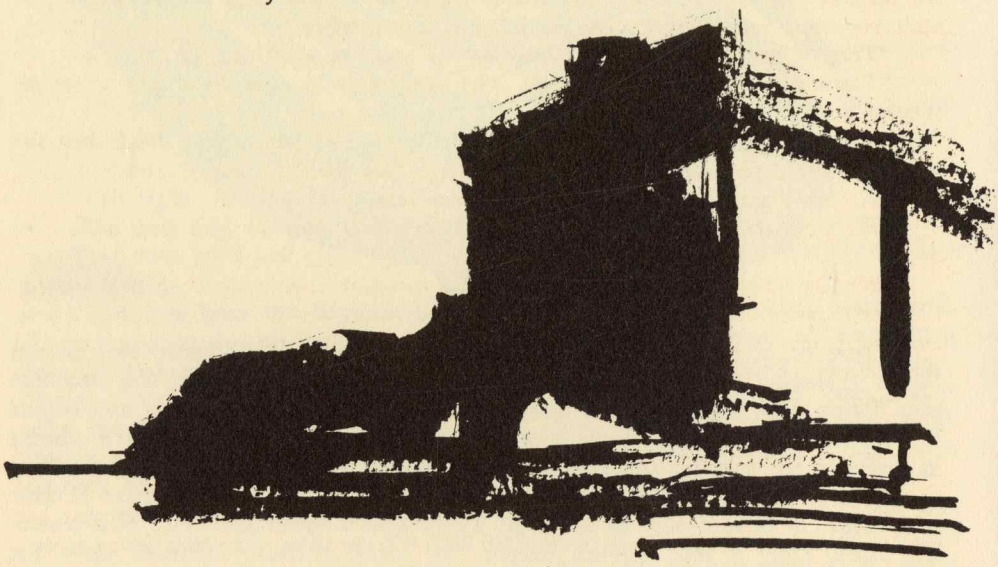


There he is, readied upon the deck of the vessel; and moments later, poised like a glistening dagger in flight, he is passing downward toward the beautiful blue water. Now with hardly a splash, he cuts the surface of the sea and begins his descent to the depths. Incredible how warm the water is today. It is almost as warm as the tropical airs around it. The bright sun seems to bathe everything in its radiant arms. Only a few feet below the surface now and the water is clear and bright. It is very easy to see here. There goes a small school of fish scurrying away. Only a few fathoms deeper, the water pressure increases upon the man, and a large porpoise glides swiftly by at a distance. Now a tremendous shark circles curiously and slowly passes on toward the surface, but the man seems to pay no attention to the shark and continues his lone dive. Now the light has grown dimmer and a noticeable chill, which gradually increases, begins. At the moment, there is scarcely any sign of life stirring around the man; there is no movement of the water at all. Still steadily and silently he proceeds on his journey. Strange how the last few glittering rays of sunlight can be magnificent down here in the depths. Strange also how quiet things can be. Suddenly in the darkness, some sort of deep sea creature collides with him and rushes off into the murky depths, but with hardly any hesitation the man continues downward. Few amateurs and only a measurably few more professional divers ever reach or attempt to reach this depth, but he passes on below. Now the pressure is overwhelming, there is only a faint glow of light above, and the water is as cold as that from a mountain stream in March. Without even a falter, he continues his lone descent. What is this below? It is a faint light moving, but alas, as he approaches, it is only a luminous eel or something resembling one. At this depth, even the most daring and adventurous divers turn back, for only a few feet below lies the world's diving record, but this does not slow his pace—he merely descends deeper. Now there is only total darkness. No sound is heard. The pressure is almost greater than the human can endure. Below for hundreds and hundreds of feet lies only the pitch blackness of the unknown, but he quietly and steadily proceeds downward. Now he has passed the world's record for skin-diving, but he will never claim the medal, for a short time later his body comes to an abrupt halt on the bottom with the attached weights submerging him in the mire.

As the Chaplain finishes the final word of the prayer, the old weathered sailor completes his last voyage.

No Stillness At Appomatox

by BRAD WALLACE



"Put the cats in a bucket, Candy, and clean the brim first. Reckon you'll find some roe?"

"Yas suh, ought to."

"Well, bein' as how you caught 'em, I reckon I can let you have 'em tonight."

"Yas suh, Sho' do like them roe."

"Give me my knife so I can clean the rest, and leave the guts on the porch for the dogs."

"Uber—Uber, that you?"

"Yes'm, it is."

"I been worried sick since you and Candy left. Uber, come up front and look."

"Not much to these squirrels but taste, Candy, but I reckon that'll add to a stew."

"Uber, listen to me!" She arched her small body and made the words hoarse. "I been sitin' here all day not knowin' whether you was goin' to walk in or be brung in."

Uber looked up from his meager catch and started at his sister. His eyes were tired and his face and body were mud-splattered and a little haggard from having tramped the swamp all the night before.

"What's wrong, Josie? What's got you upset now?"

"Come here and see for yourself.' She took him by the hand as if he were a child and led him through the shanty to the one front window. The oil-cloth shutter was pulled back and she peered out on the rutted mud street. "They been millin' round out there since sun-up. They know better than to bunch up, but they can still cause trouble, Uber."

Uber glanced through the opening, then turned away, shedding his butternut jacket and folding it gingerly over a chair as he crossed the room. "I don't see nobody but Harry Middlebrook and his brother, and God knows those two ain't got sense enough between 'em to start any trouble."

"They've been more, Uber. Sometimes as many as eight or ten."

"There's no law against it, Josie. They can walk around on a city street all they've a mind to."

"Arnie's been out there." She delivered this as an ultimatum. Uber stopped by the hearth and raked ashes into the banked fire with his boot.

"Arnie's a good friend, Josie," he finally said.

"He used to be, Uber. He'd as soon lynch you now as give you a howdy-do."

"No, he wouldn't do that." He paused a moment, then looked up and smiled. "Me and Candy are set for a big meal tonight, Josie. We got catfish and a whole mess of brim, and I found two big onions behind the army tents. You can cut the rot out of 'em and put 'em in the bread if there's any meal left. We can eat tonight, Josie . . . "

Her expression grew harder and sadder. "Havin' that darky here ain't goin' to help you a bit, Uber. We don't need him. You ought to send him off."

"He ain't got no place to go. He works for his keep, anyway." All this was spoken matter-of-factly; he had no fire or venom in his argument. "He gets his own food and a lot of what you eat. I'd never knowed how to trap if he hadn't showed me. I been dependin' on a gun all my life."

"He's a good boy, Uber, but you ought to turn him loose."

"Somebody already has," he said quietly, "and he's still here."

"Uber . . . " but she spoke to his back as he, the subject dropped, shuffled to the back porch.

"What did you find, Candy?"

"Handful of roe, Marse Uber. Mighty near two handful."

The two talked on together, lightly, of fishing and trapping. Josie smoothed her apron and bit her lip. He had changed so very much: there was no reasoning with him when he shut himself off as he often did. He had come to spend his time hunting with the darky, and when they finally brought their catch in they would remain on the steps talking for hours.

The meal sack was suspended on a thin twine out of reach of the rodents and roaches that threatened the precious food supply. It was light now, though, empty save for a few crumbs and the weevils feeding on them.

"We're out of meal, Uber," Josie call out, trying to sound concerned.

Uber wiped his hands on a burlap rag and retrieved his jacket from the shanty. "Candy."

"Suh."

"You go down to the mill and see if Mr. Tom want let you get a little meal from under the stone. If I can't get a handful on credit at the store, I'll beg some off a bluecoat."

Candy sprinted across the back lot and set out toward the gristmill, a half-mile's distance. He crossed a field littered with dead cotton stalks and disappeared in the branch head a short way from the shanty. The gristmill was off to itself and away from the main roads and the urban areas. Thus it had, like many more of its kind, been saved from fire and artillery. The business was saved while the

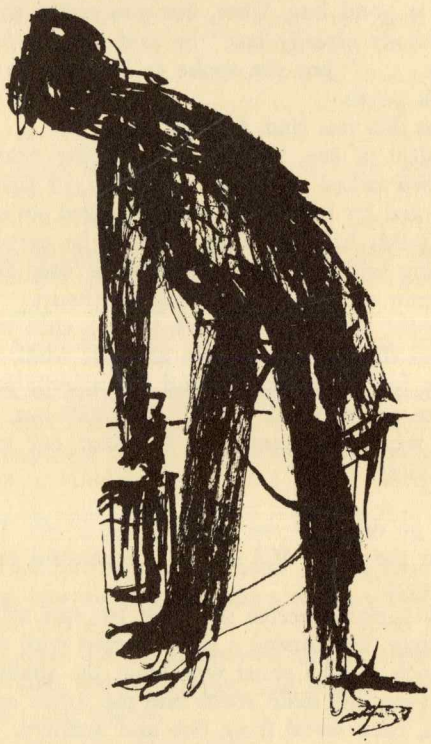
land lay fallow and the workers ran free. There was little incentive or means to grow the crops, no way at all to grow them on the grand scale of a few years before. Small patches of vegetables had flourished in the spring, but the cribs were being robbed of their corn in the fall to work the mill that had missed the war.

Uber was gone before Josie could say anything more, so she called herself silly and tried to cover her own fears in his unconcern. He crossed his fence and walked toward the makeshift general store ignoring the rough places in the street, but carefully saving his patched boots from the water holes. He had gone no more than half the distance when his hat was suddenly knocked from his head; and before he could retrieve it, he was pelted so hard he slipped and fell—an arm sunk to the elbow in mud.

Peels of gruff laughter rolled down the street that had been deserted. Across and down from him Uber saw three dark figures dancing gleefully; three dark little boys, none older than twelve, grinned broadly, their eyes wide and wild with a new freedom. Behind and around them gathered the crowd which had concerned Josie. They appeared from stores and alleys, in butternut and borrowed blue, with an occasional limp and patched eye; they were silent and foreboding.

A nod from one in the crowd and their three young henchmen picked the hardened mule and horse dung from the street and leveled another barrage at the stunned Uber. He gathered himself from the mud and waving his arms frantically shouted "Scat!", which was the only sound that he could make. The three fled, looking back from time to time to grin at their victim. Uber did not pursue far, for the crowd formed a semi-circle, then closed ranks around him. One of them stepped forward and the two faced each other squarely.

"You ought not to chase your boys, Uber," he said. "You'll have the blue-bellies on your neck if you chase your nigger boys."



The crowd shifted restlessly and glared at Uber as they waited for his reply. One of the men spat tobacco juice carelessly in his direction but Uber would not take his eyes off the man he faced.

"They ain't no more mine then yores, Arnie."

"Oh, but they are. You signed a paper yesterday, Uber. You took a oath that made you a full-fledged citizen of these-here United States and raised you up to the level of those nigger boys that just ran down the street. They're your little black brothers."

The crowd murmured its agreement. Someone called out "Did they give forty acres and a mule, Uber?" and a menacing smile passed among them. But there was no laughter.

"You already entertainin' one black fella over at your place," Arnie continued, "You going to take all the rest of the strays and keep them up?"

"I hear tell a man doin' that in Shoffa County," the tobacco chewer spoke up, " 'cept he herds 'em in a bunch and lets 'em graze on cornstalks." And again, the mocking refrain of smiles.

"Candy's a good boy, Arnie . . . "Uber began.

"Course he is, Uber," Arnie said enthusiastically, "big, fine, boy."

"There was some good boys fought with us at Shiloh . . . "

"But no black ones!"

" . . . and some bad ones, too. And you didn't care if he was general or sargeant if he stuck with you and fought it out, he was a good man. Just one at a time, Arnie, you never downed a whole company jus' because you didn't like the ones that ran out."

"You used to be a pretty good soldier yourself, Uber," Arnie declared matter-of-factly. "You were as good a man as I ever had to use a rifle, and fight hand to hand. I reckon you never stopped long to figure on what it was you were fightin' for. Either that, or you sure do forget in a hurry. By the way, Uber, how long you figure its going to take for you to learn to say "sir" and "mister" to what's-his name . . . that Candy. You learn to wait on him yet?"

Uber paused before he spoke and stared hopelessly at the mocking eyes. "The Major up at the stockade," he finally said, "claims he likes 'em cause they're black; you figure you hate 'em for the same reason. I reckon you're both kind of color blinded."

"Color blind, huh. That's pretty good, Uber."

Uber dropped his hands to his side and looked blankly at his interrogator. "War's over, Arnie, and I'm tired of fightin'. I been fightin' three years, jus' like you, and I'm tired. I got no fight with you."

"You didn't have to take that oath, dammit!" Arnie's face blazed and his speech was raspy where it had been smooth with sarcasm. "You could of kept out of everybody's way and still not sworn to be a boot-lickin' bluebelly-buddy and a nigger-lover. Boys aren't hardly cold in the ground—boys from here; boys you knew and rode with. You're a damn turn-coat, Uber Brock, and a lynchin' is about the only thing that will settle you!"

War's over, Arnie. I wanted everybody to know that's how I felt. I took the oath so's everybody would leave me be and jus' lemme take care of me and my sister . . ."

"And your nigger friend?" Arnie fired back.

There was a chilling pause before anyone spoke. Uber dropped his head and felt himself grow hazy, the same way he felt when his sister nagged him.

"He might be . . . He works for his keep," he insited. "He traps and fishes and pretty near feeds us. He's a good boy. He's gonna stay on our place, I don't care what. He's free . . . "

"The hell he is!" somebody shouted, and the crowd became a mob and the mob bared its fangs and closed in to beat and spit and kick. There would have been one quick and certain end had not the sound of marching feet drawn them to attention. In one brief instant they turned and looked in the same direction, as if they were once again a military unit. The hatred in each face increased as guns at ready and fixed bayonets mutely ordered them to cease.

A stubby little soldier in blue pushed his way throug the crown, his yellow sargeant's stripes glaring like red in the faces of so many bulls. He lifted Uber roughly to his feet then turned to the face he knew best. "God-damn you, Arnie Stover! I should've known you'd be in it. I told the Major this mornin' it was too quiet and calculated you'd be up to somethin'. God-dammit, can't you leave things in peace one day? I'm a son-of-a-bitch if you can't raise more hell than Jeb Stewart and Jackson put together. What in the name of sam-hill have you done now?"

"Just trying to keep peace, Sargeant."

The sargeant guffawed and spat on the ground. "Well, that takes it, Stover, that really does. The idea of you tryin' to keep peace this side of your grave is the funniest damn joke I've heard in a long time."

"This fellow was chasing darkies," Arnie said, still unruffled.

The sargeant turned to Uber. "That right?"

"No suh, it ain't," Uber gasped, still trying to catch his breath.

"Well, I've a mind to believe you, knowin' this damn scoundrel. You come with me and give it to the major."

"I signed the oath yesterday; I ain't mad at nobody and I don't want to put yore major on to nobody." Uber stared straight ahead, ignoring the belligerent faces around him.

"You come with me anyway. And as for you," he said turning to Arnie, "if I so much as see you in the street in front of your God-damn store I'll lock you under the stockade, and if this man don't give the Major satisfaction you may wind up there anyway."

The sun was setting when Uber finally left the major's cabin. It lingered somewhat uselessly behind long thin clouds; it seemed to have no effect on the cold. A chill October wind blew smoke pungent with oak and hickory in Uber's face and sharpened his appetite. It would be good, the shanty and a hot meal and quiet. He had been offered a guard, but the military had been a burden and a fetter too long; he had declined.

Far down the street the younger of the Middlebrook brothers tied plow-line to his saddle and, with a nod from Arnie Stover, mounted and rode in the direction of the branch-head behind Uber's house. Arnie waited until Uber was in ear-shot, then called out to him, "Uber . . .oh, Uber."

Uber ignored him, but he persisted.

"Uber Brock . . . You better go see about your boy."

Uber froze in his tracks. "Who, Arnie? What you talkin' about?"

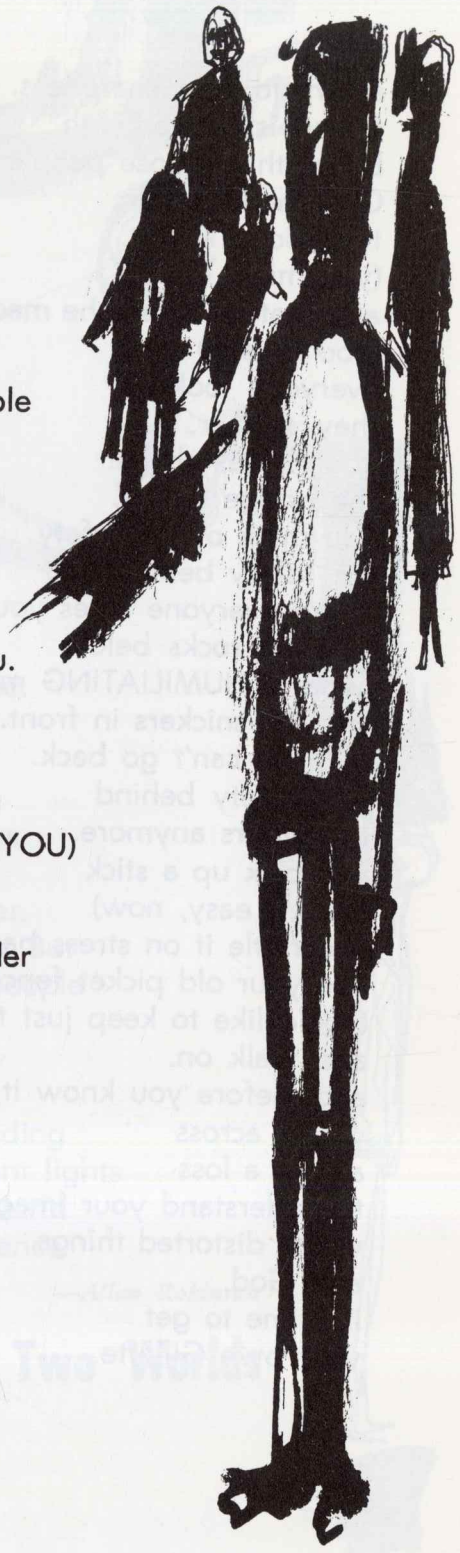
"Your nigger boy, Uber. Harry Middlebrook sent word up he fell in the mill pond or something."

The wind cut deeper; Uber felt it cut to the marrow of his body. "You lyin', Arnie? What's happened to him?"

"If you don't believe me, Uber, you best go see for yourself."

Uber turned and began to lope. He cleared a fence and broke into a trot, pushing aside the cotton stalks as he went, growing smaller until he disappeared into the branch-head. On the street an army wagon bounced over the rutted road, the sound of the wheels like the roar of canon in the distance.

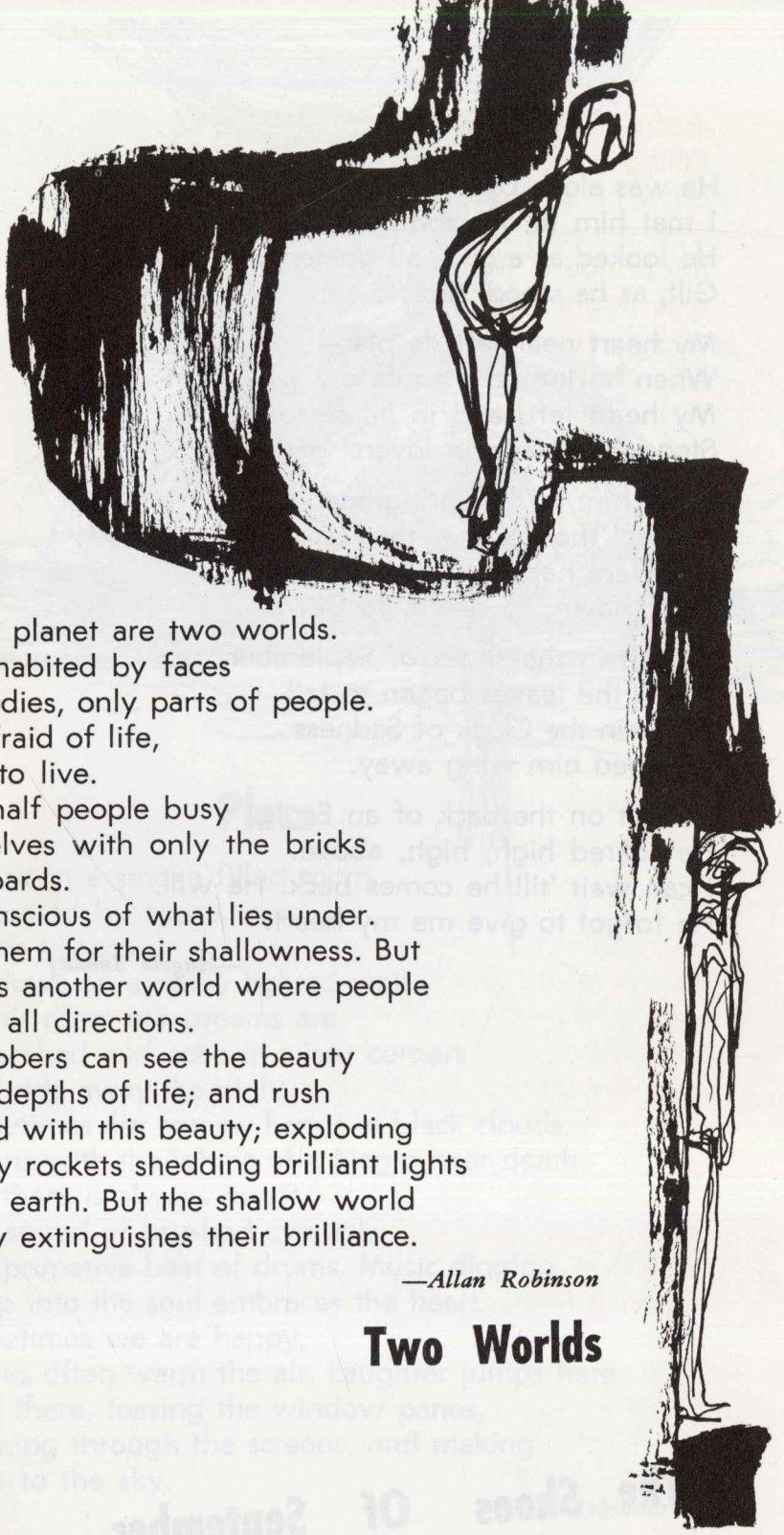
Part Of A Story



You step on the bridge
and start walking.
rough winds and swaying steel,
untried legs and a good deal
of fear of failure,
for failure is falling,
hamper you and add to the trouble
of getting across, and double
the length of the bridge
in your mind's eye.
you sit down right there,
right in the middle,
and would cry
if every one wasn't looking at you.
you wipe your face.
oil on your hand.
oh damn it.
all those people
(naturally everyone is looking at YOU)
snicker.
the sky resounds with thunder,
scaring the people, and you wonder
why the sky
has the voice of a lion.
you could use it.
it starts to rain.
fiercely it rains.
the water in the gorge
way,
way,
way,
way,
down
seethes churns, splashes
and and
the rocks in its midst.

accent to their sharpness.
falling is bad enough,
but with all those people looking. . . .
God made it rain.
the bridge is wet.
(you might slip)
as a matter of fact, he made your funny, big nose.
(you do slip)
everyone looks.
they snicker.
your knees shake.
the bridge sways.
you think of the safety.
the safety behind you
(there everyone loves you)
and the rocks below
(what a HUMILIATING mess you'd make)
and the snickers in front.
but you can't go back.
that safety behind
isn't yours anymore.
you pick up a stick
(take it easy, now)
and rattle it on stress bars
like your old picket fence,
(you'd like to keep just that)
and walk on.
and, before you know it,
you're across
and at a loss
to understand your imagination,
which distorted things
and God.
it's time to get
your own Gillette.

—Gary Foy



Two Worlds

On this planet are two worlds.
One inhabited by faces
And bodies, only parts of people.
Parts afraid of life,
Afraid to live.
These half people busy
Themselves with only the bricks
And boards.
Not conscious of what lies under.
I pity them for their shallowness. But
There is another world where people
Live in all directions.
The probers can see the beauty
In the depths of life; and rush
Upward with this beauty; exploding
Like sky rockets shedding brilliant lights
On the earth. But the shallow world
Quickly extinguishes their brilliance.

—Allan Robinson

He was alone by the brake when
I met him in the spring.
He looked as a god, all golden
Gilt, as he stood, face to sun.

My heart near left its place
When he turned a smile my way,
My heart left, and in its stead
Stood his image in lovers' garb.

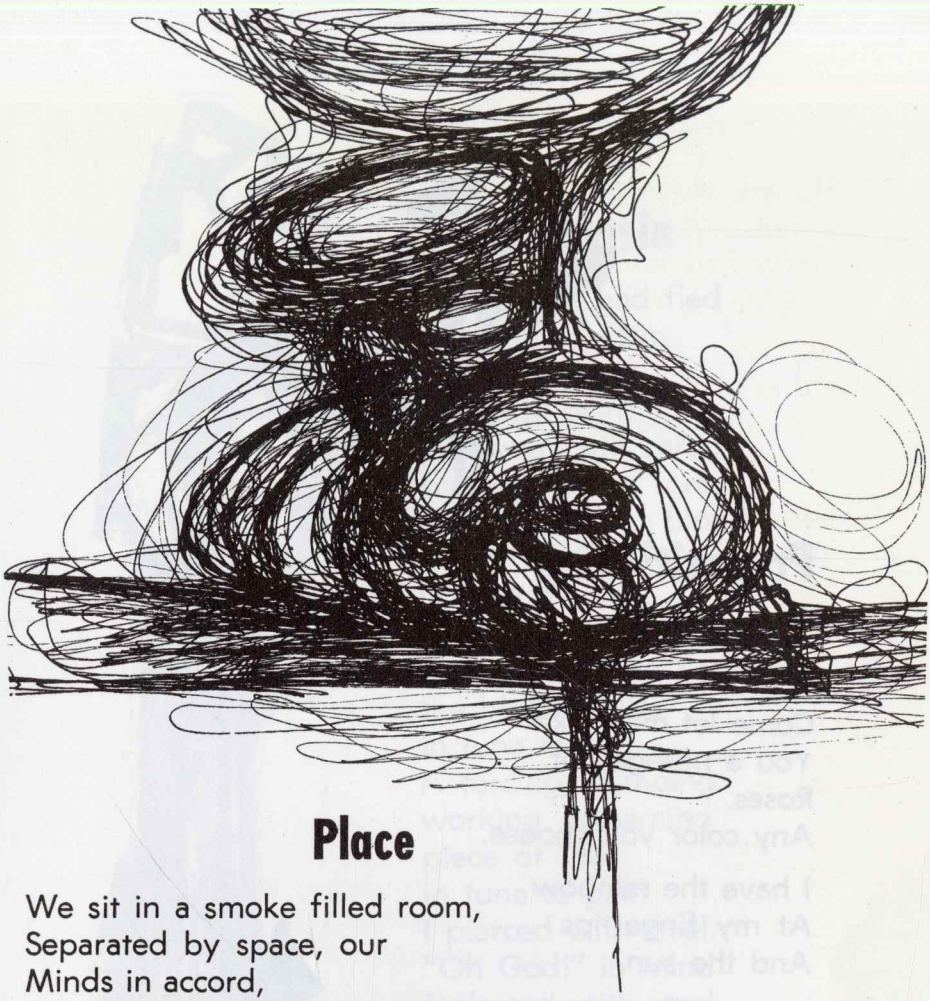
I met him in the springtime,
And all the summer through
We were happy together,
From dawn, to dawn, to dawn.

He left in the shoes of September.
When the leaves began to fall.
And I in the Cloak of Sadness
Watched him wing away.

He left on the back of an Eagle.
He soared high, high, above.
I can wait 'till he comes back. He will.
He forgot to give me my heart.

—Angela Snoddy

The Shoes Of September



Place

We sit in a smoke filled room,
Separated by space, our
Minds in accord,
Shadows on a dimly lighted wall.
In this room our dreams are
Unleashed and echo in silent corners
And ride away the night.
Sometimes our sorrow hangs in black clouds.
Moans with the whine of a Negro near death.
But there is always music,
The sound of brushed cymbols,
The primative beat of drums. Music digging
Deep into the soul embraces the heart.
Sometimes we are happy,
Smiles often warm the air. Laughter jumps here
And there, teasing the window panes,
Running through the screens, and making
Love to the sky.

—Allan Robinson

Propositioning

Come let me make
You a nosegay of
Roses.
Any color you choose.

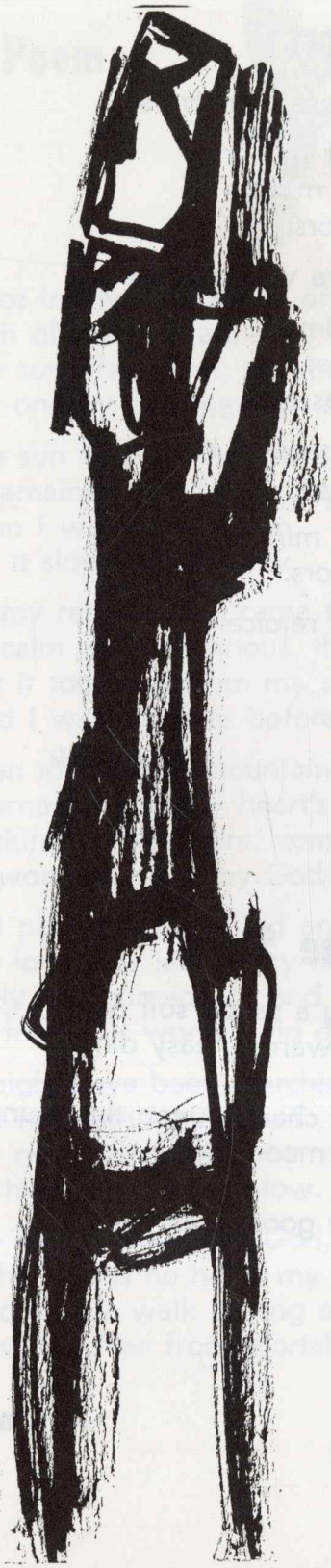
I have the rainbow
At my fingertips
And the sun.

Come let me drink
In the warmth of your
Laughter
And be drunk of your charms.

I have the rainbow
At my fingertips
And the sun.

Come let me tell
You I'll love you for
Ever
Should you consent
I am sure
I'll have the rainbow
At my fingertips
And the sun.

—Angela Snoddy



Euthanasia

All thought had fled
that human form
in tune to pain
and only pain.
The lungs still shrank
and swelled to force
through cell, to blood,
the air of life
in tune to pain.
The heart still pumped
through vein, to tissue,
the blood of life
in tune to pain.
A forcing, pumping
working, screaming
piece of life
in tune to pain
I pierced with steel.
"Oh God!" in mind
I pierced with steel
the heart that pumped,
the lungs that forced,
a life of pain.
A severed muscle
is not a pumper;
a punctured bag
is not a forcer;
a human form
with an airless brain
is dead in fact
and dead to pain.

—Gary Foy

House of Mirrors

Come live with me in my house of mirrors

my wonderous house of mirrors
my beauteous house of mirrors
my lovely house of mirrors.

Each cold reflecting glass there will increase

yourself ten thousand times
yourself ten million times
yourself ten billion times.

Come love with me in my house of mirrors

my wonderous house of mirrors
my beauteous house of mirrors
my lovely house of mirrors.

Each self of me reflected will rejoice
ten thousand times
ten million times
ten billion times.

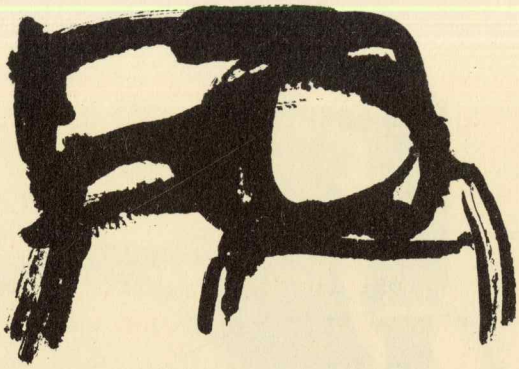
—Ken Sobbie

Visit to the Store

Small skinny feet skip along a sandy soil path
While fat hands clutch two warm greasy dimes.
On reaching the destination
Fat hands clunk the clammy change upon the counter.
These pieces purchase four moon pies.
OH BOY!!
Chocolate cakes with gooey gooey inbetween.
Gobble!
Gobble!
Gobble!
Gobble!
OH STOMACH-ACHE!!

—Vic Brown

A Poem



Once in my lite I loved of the earth
Each of these three:
The sun, the moon, the mountains
But one by one they left me.

The sun was my first love,
It remained faithful for half a day.
Then I was alone again
For it slowly died away.

To my rescue, then came the moon.
So calm and mysterious, that my thoughts did soar.
But it too sank from my sight,
And I was alone as before.

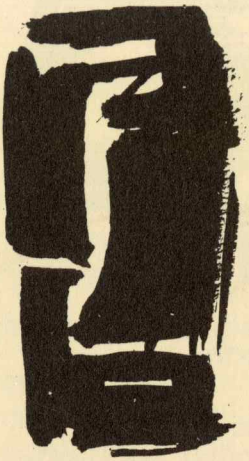
Then to the vast mountains
I turned my lonely heart's love.
Seeking contentment, companionship
In wonders made by God above,

But nature soon wilted and died away,
No love was left in my heart,
Only hate, dread . . . and fear.
So from this world I did depart.

I might have been searching for a fantasy,
But how am I to know?
For no longer can I give my love
To heathen things below.

My love is now with God,
In his hands he holds my life.
I no longer walk among sinners.
Now I'm free from mortal strife.

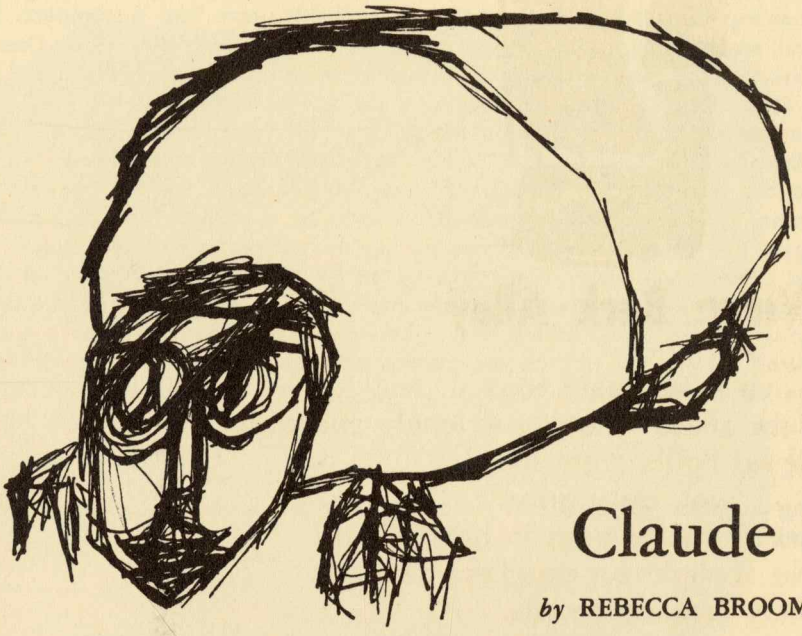
—Vicki Lyle



View: Back Alley

I live in a dream fog,
Back alleys where it is lonely and dark.
Street lights greet me,
Dull, wet, dirty grins.
There are no trees in back alleys,
No sunlight on cloudless days.
Only faceless people.
Sad, sad people, sick with the world,
Sick with themselves; praying to golden idols.
Their faces in a gutter.
I laugh, that is all I am able to do.
Laugh and laugh, but no one really
Hears or cares.
Laughter is just another long forgotten sound.
Their world is not mine
Yet we walk the same streets.
We see the same buildings. And I live,
Yet they die, once, twice, maybe three times
Each day.
Some decadent bar their
Coffin. But their coffin is not mine. I live.
I shall live until I can
Crawl into the sunlight and die
In its warmth.

—Allan Robinson



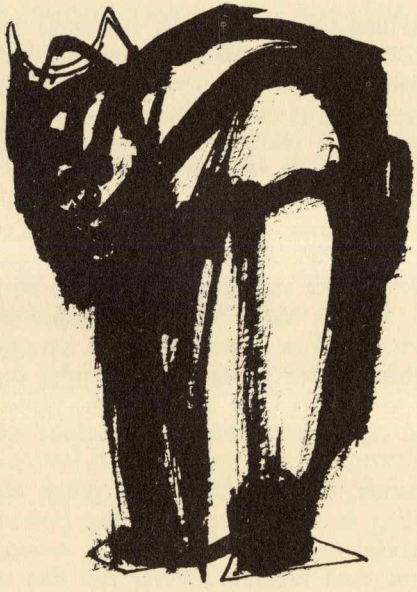
Claude

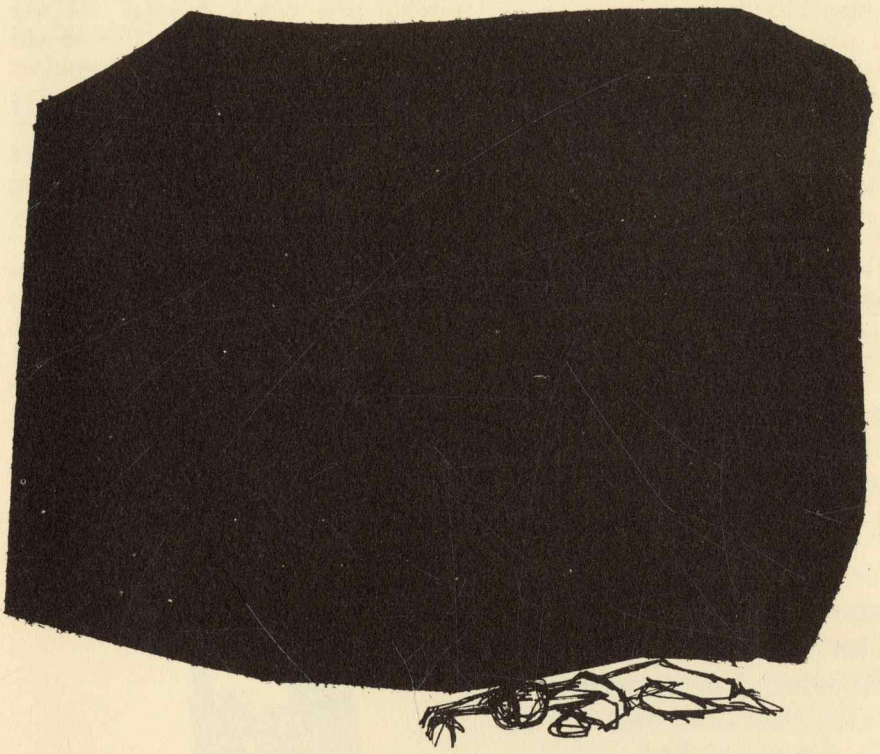
by REBECCA BROOM

Let me tell you about my bug. A black bug—a beetle to be exact—to be even more exact, a misplaced water beetle. I say misplaced because there just wasn't any water laying around—where he lived that is. This was a very special bug. He was common, but he was special. You see; it's quite simple; he was my bug. You've heard about people being bugged, but I really was. I had my own very special bug—a black bug—a water beetle in fact. He was very kind; wouldn't harm a fly. But I never heard tell of a beetle who bugged flies. That, however, is beside the point. He was kind. Which was entirely to his advantage, for I wouldn't have kept him around if he hadn't been. We do so often have to put up with unkindnesses and I am greatly appreciative of any kindness. That is why I liked this bug. He kept down rodents, too. I don't know how he managed it, but he did. But he wouldn't harm a fly. Oh, but I've said that. Well, let me tell you more. He was intelligent. I know this without a shadow of doubt, for I gave him an intelligence test. He managed to mangle it in all the right places, so I felt that I could be assured of his mental capacities. I choose to overlook his masticating tendencies.

This bug and I hit off a real good harmony, too. We liked each other. He respected me, and I respected him. No crawling in my hair and no bug poison. Just like that—simple, huh? I was always careful to leave crumbs laying around for him, and he always seemed to enjoy them. And besides, I never did like to sweep. He sorta kept things cleaned up. And I appreciated that. I always have liked kindness.

Everything went real fine till July. We'd shared our mutual happiness since March. I think? Yeah—he took up with me in March. I know it must have been March. That's the only month I get bugs. Don't know why. Rabbits never have took up with me in March—only August. All of a sudden in March he was there. And I really didn't mind. Really I've rather enjoyed my bug. I never got around to naming him though I should've. It probably gave him a complex. He was a real sensitive bug. Now that I think about it, I feel right bad. One should always be kind, and it wasn't kind not to name that bug. Well, like I say, we got along fine till July. And all of a sudden he took it in his head to get a little smarter. Not like chewing the holes in the paper better, but he wanted to be big dog. Can you imagine a bug—a black bug—a water beetle wanting to be a big wheel? Well, let me tell you. I won't stand for no bug playing big with me. I tolerated his sassiness for a little bit, but then I couldn't take it any longer. The thing that just broke me up was when he dedided crumbs weren't good enough, and he crawled right up on my food. I told him I'd as lief he'd not take the liberties to dirty up my plate. But he just sat there like he wasn't hearing a word I was saying. But I know he was. That made me a little mad. Whether he was my bug or not, he was not going to sit on my plate and blink those beetle eyes and tell me he couldn't full well understand. Well, right then and there we parted company. I feel like a murderer, but I got my rights. Yes sir, I killed him. Mashed him flat with the chicken leg he was eying. It was just not kind. I won't have no black water beetles eying my chicken legs. The idea! Eying a chicken leg that isn't yours. Well, that was July. In August I was rabbitted.





God-Poems

Only once in a generation comes an artistic innovation so profound in its significance, so universal in its influence that the most critical cannot fail to acknowledge the power of its appeal. Such an innovation is the God poem, and we of the editorial staff of the TOWER herald it as the most sensational literary genre of the century. From the deluge of God poems that have inundated the TOWER office, we have selected those on the following pages as representative.

What is a God poem?

A God poem is a cross between T. S. Eliot and Allen Ginsburg with Alexander Pope thrown in for good measure. It is non-conformity eulogising itself; inhibition turned intrepid.

A God poem is Everyman holding a cracked mirror up to nature.

Protest biting its fingernails,

Humanism with grit in its teeth,

A one way choo choo ride to decadence.

A God poem is a God poem is a God poem is a God poem is a?

We hail it!

God-Poem

Write me a God-poem—write about the moon
That rhymes with JUNE and CROON and MACROON
Write how we are you are they are PEOPLE
With no church just a steeple
Staring eyes glazed with despair
Smell of goat about our hair
Staggered by the din of sin
Without a hell to enter in
Just LOST etcetera and so
Forth round and round and round we go!

"We are the Perjured Peripatetic
diabolically frenetic
hallowed hollow-eyed relentless
dessicated doom-encrusted
SOULS (full of holes)
with no goals
and no soles to our feet
as we tramp along the street
singing god god god
luckless and lugubrious
loud-mouthed
hul
a
bal
lu
bri
us
WE ARE THE PEOPLE PEOPLE
strangling uncomplaining on
the stench of sulfur raining on
our wastrel nostrils and
our guilt-encysted hands

Our father who
Is not a Jew
  But a Christian good
And fair-skinned too

Who art (they say)
in heaven today
  Hallowed be
Thy breakfast tray

Thy kingdom go
The way of snow
  In a summer sun
When the tulips blow

Thy will of steel
Teach us to peel
  Our onions and
No tears to feel

In earth and sky
That all on high
  Rejoicing may
Not see us cry

Give us this night
A firefly's light
  And bread that's not
Too hard to bite

Forgive us this
Unholy kiss
  By which we spurn
Thy promised bliss

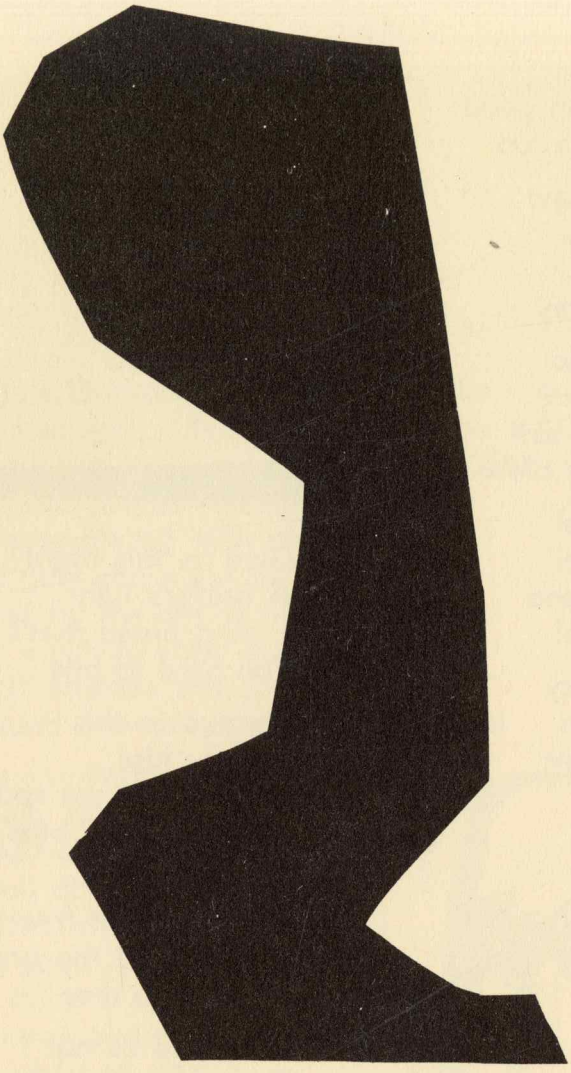
Even as we
From fear set free
  May find the grace
To pardon thee

And lead us not
To question what
  Is thine affair
Or curse our lot

But keep thee still
Our failing will
  From dreams that numb
And hopes that kill

For thine is all
The reeling ball
  Wherein we stumble
Till we fall.

—Cassandra

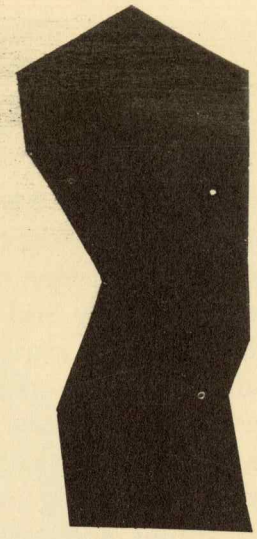


God Poem No. 1

I am the loneliest of all mankind
I am sitting forsaken in a corner playing with my toes
With toenails I cannot cut for no one will lend me scissors.
They offered me an axe.
My corner is cold and the plaster is pealing
And my teeth are
ro
tt
ing
out.

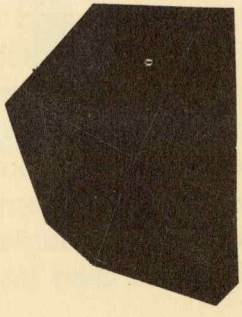
—Jessie Stone

God Poem No. ½



There is no one to whom I may bear my soul
They would sneer at its purity.
Distressed by destiny, forsaken by friends, I lament my loss
That I never gained.
Weight is all my gain,
The burden of my soul is overbearing
And there is none who will help share its mass.
The velocity of my acceleration equals zero.

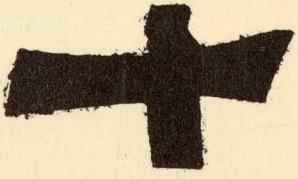
—Jessie Stone

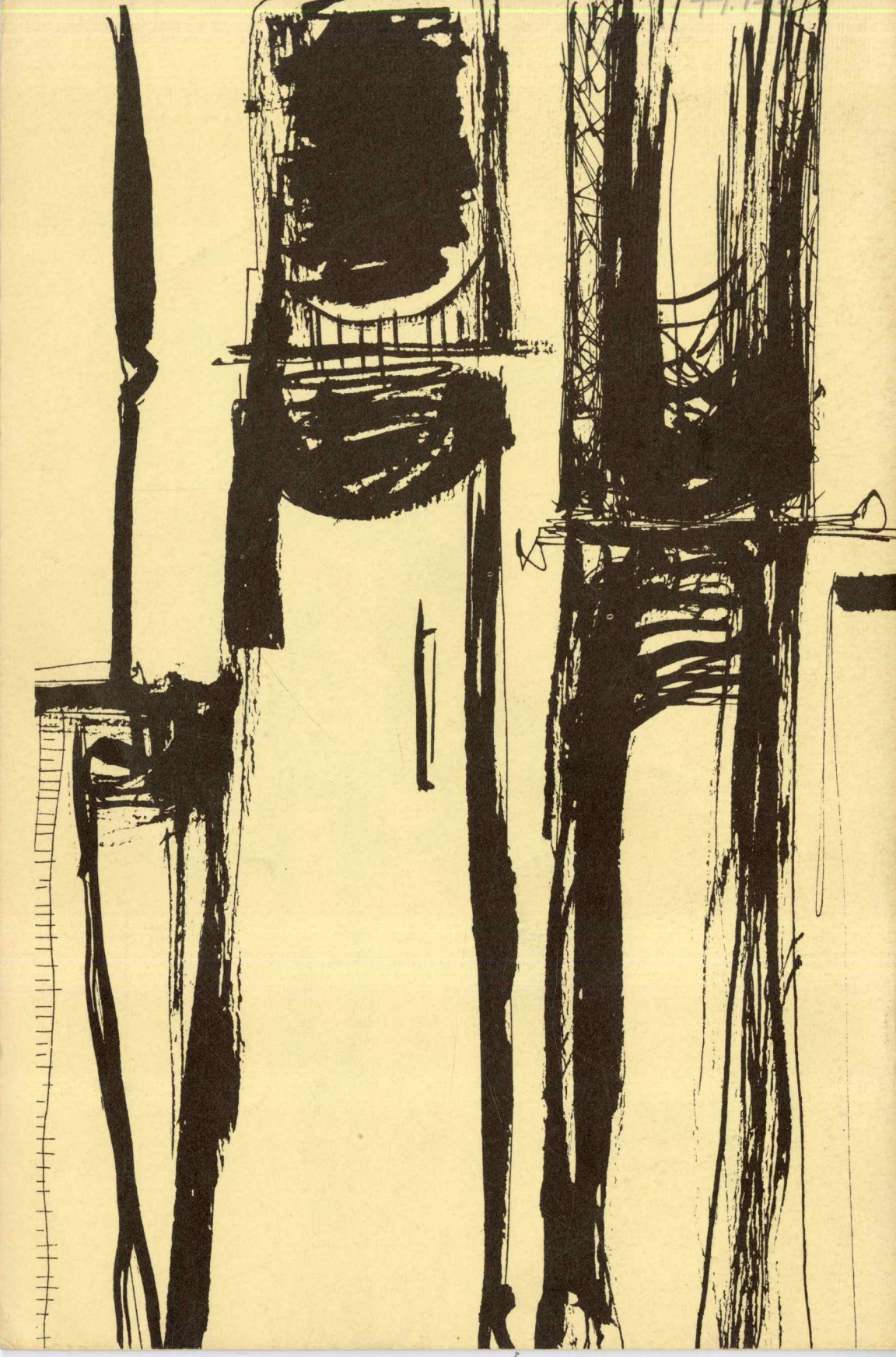


God-Man

"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Jesus died last night . . .
And Jesus is a woman
Mary Olive is Her name.
She has a baby and votes for president,
And Bill looks important when telling Her how to vote
And how much sugar goes in the baby's oats.
Mary Olive goes to church and tries hard not to smirk.
The bombastic preacher talks of the man called Jesus,
And Jesus sitting in the pew kisses Her baby's hand
And smiles and smiles and tolerates man . . .
And Jesus is a nigger
Tall, majestic, black as night,
He enters a loaded trolley car.
By the side of a pure white girl
Is one seat empty amidst the rest.
In the middle of the aisle He chooses to stand
And smiles and smiles and looks superior.
And Jesus is a swell-bellied boy
He sleeps in gutters and eats from garbage cans.
He receives Red Cross care packages and feeds them to His cat.
His stomach groans with hunger
And He smiles and smiles and picks pockets.
And Jesus is a bug
He got turned over on His back,
And He claws the air in spastic jerks
Then slowly, slowly dies from neglect.
Somebody stepped on Him,
But He smiles and smiles and drags His leg along.
And Jesus is a bitch
Whipped for having puppies.
She watches two of them get drowned,
Then goes and licks the rest
And smiles and smiles and lets them eat.
And Jesus is humanity
And Jesus died last night.



The third day comes;
He arises and walks among.
That's Jesus—sitting on the park bench there
Spitting through His teeth.
And the ants crawl trustingly over His shoe
And He smiles and smiles and paternally watches over them.
The God in man
Comes alive again.

—J. C. Smith